



BANGALORE AS A MEDICAL TOURIST DESTINATION CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

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ABSTRACT

Medical tourism is a term to describe the rapidly-growing practice of travelling across international borders to obtain health care. Services typically sought by travellers include elective procedures as well as complex specialized surgeries. OVC 50 countries have identified medical tourism as a national industry. With global healthcare revenues upward of US\$3.3 trillion health care is world's second largest business after retailing. The healthcare industry in India is worth US\$19 billion and is expected to grow at an annual rate of 13% for the next three years. India's annual spending on healthcare is 5.2% of GDP and is distributed between the government and public sector (37%) and private providers (individual, charitable & for non-profit ventures (63%).

The aim of this study is to determine the effective factors for attracting medical tourism to Bangalore in a variety of aspect such as propel' function of related organization, ' proper marketing mix according to special circumstances of Bangalore. It seems that knowing each these factors are necessary for entering Bangalore to medical tourism market. It examines the diverse challenges that need to be addressed for the medical tourism industry to realize its potential. It then outlines a range of strategic and tactical initiatives that would contribute to a faster growth of the industry. Special emphasis is placed on the need for partnership amongst the various stakeholders such as medical and healthcare providers, hospitality and transportation services, tourism departments and the government. This article focuses on the factors that make India the most potential medical tourism market in world. Actors such as lo cost, scale and range of treatments provide ill differentiate it from other medical tourism destinations in the world.

Keywords: Medical Tourism, Affordable Healthcare, Medical Tourists, Surgical Care.

Cite this Article: K.S. Beena and Dr. D. Venkatrama Raju, Bangalore As A Medical Tourist Destination Challenges and Prospects, International Journal of Mechanical Engineering and Technology, 10(1), 2019, pp. 405–408.

<http://www.iaeme.com/ijmet/issues.asp?JType=IJMET&VType=10&IType=1>

1. INTRODUCTION

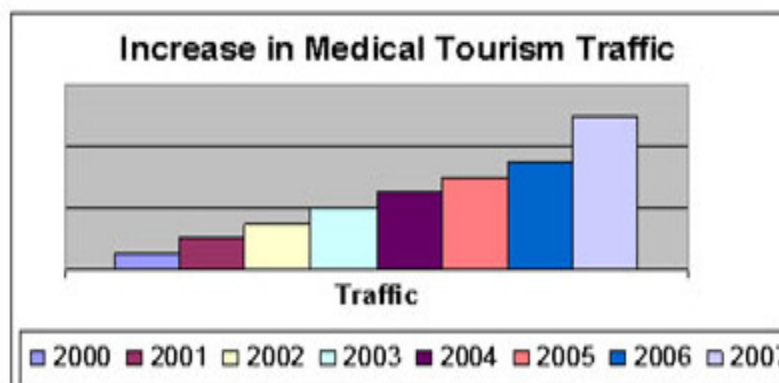
Medical tourism refers to the practice of people travelling long distances (usually across national borders) to obtain medical services coupled with an inexpensive vacation. This is not a new concept and references from historical documents have mentioned people travelling to mineral and hot water springs during the Bronze and Middle ages for medical benefits.

The healthcare industry is the world's second largest business after retail. With increasing standards in healthcare and the need for affordable treatment, the Asian market has become a goldmine for medical tourism. The medical tourism market revenue worldwide is expected to reach USD 100 billion by 2012, with Asia being the major contributor. India is an attractive healthcare destination expected to bring in between USD 11.3-22.6 billion into the country by year 2012.

2. MEDICAL TOURISM IN INDIA

Medical tourism as a term has risen rapidly in recent decades. One of the major reason for medical tourism is to get low cost and world-class medical treatment in countries like India, Thailand, South America, Singapore, and Malaysia. Health and medical tourism is perceived as one of the fastest growing segments in marketing 'Destination India today. In recent years, availability of latest medical facilities and technological advancement in developing countries like India making these countries as the hot zones for medical tourism. As a rule of thumb in medical tourism, people are not only aspiring better treatments for their ailments but are also looking at the holistic well-being. They want to recover, relax, rejuvenate, rejoice and more over get away from the routine. Thus, medical tourism offers a synergy of healthcare, tourism and hospitality, proving to be attractive and energetic health package for the people. India offers world class and the best qualified doctors, despite the lowest cost in all kind of medical interventions compared with other developing countries. Other advantages of Medical Tourism in India includes no waiting list, less chance of resisted infections compared to UK or other Western countries.

With state-of –the –art medical care available at one-tenth the cost of advanced countries (see table), India ranks second in the world for medical tourism. The slogan 'First World Treatment at Third World Prices' is most apt. The therapies lie Ayurveda Unani medicine and Homeopathy seem to attract newer patients due to unbelievably true results.



Source: www.indiahealthvisit.com

Medical tourism in India accounts for 3-5% of total healthcare delivery market and attracts patients from a lot of countries including USA, UK, Canada, and South Africa. India has immense potential for further growth and development in this sector. Some of the major advantages that India has for medical tourism to flourish are as follows:

- **Cost:** There is a cost difference of approximately 200-800% between healthcare services provided in India and most other countries. Complicated surgeries and treatment are made possible at almost one tenth of the cost of developed countries. Due to strong generic drug business and low cost of drug development, India offers low medication cost. According to a study conducted by American Medical Association, the cost of heart bypass surgery in the US is approximately US\$ 1,3,000 as compared to US\$ 10,000 in India.
- **Quality:** India has the advantage of having world class medical facilities which includes state of the art hospitals, a large pool of trained doctors, dedicated nurses, and well trained paramedics. Indian medical professionals also possess competent English speaking skills that come in handy when interacting with patients from all over the world.
- **Hospitals;** Involvement of private players like Apollo Hospitals Enterprise Ltd., Fortis Health Care Ltd., and SRL Rimbaxy, are expanding in India and abroad through mergers and acquisitions.
- **Pharmaceuticals industry;** the pharmaceuticals industry in India is growing rapidly. India also has a very strong generic drugs industry which has resulted in cheap and affordable medicines. Research and development is also improving in the country, which holds promise for the future of the healthcare industry in India.
- **Holistic (alternative) medical services** Ayurveda, the traditional healthcare system of India, yoga, and spiritual healing are fast becoming popular in the west, which attract many medical tourists to the country.
- **Popular tourist destination:** India is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world, renowned for its historical and cultural diversity. It is ranked in the top five favourite destinations worldwide.

Medical Value Travel- The India Cost Advantage

Procedure	US	India	Thailand	Singapore	Malaysia	Panama	S.Korea	Taiwan
Coronary Artery-Bypass Surgery	70000-133000	7000	22000	16300	12000	10500	31950	27500
Bypass surgery	75000-14000	9500	25000	22000	13000	13500	4200	30000
Hip replacement	33000-57000	7200	1200	12000	7500	5500	10600	8800
Knee replacement	30000-53000	7200	11500	9600	12000	7000	11800	10000
Prostate Surgery	10000-16000	3600	4400	5300	4600	3200	3150	2450
Gastric Bypass	35000	9300-52000	13000	16500	12700	8500	9300	10000
Face-Lift	10500-16000	4800	5000	7500	6400	2500	6650	8500

Source: Hindu Survey of Indian Industry 2009 (in US\$)

Despite strong potential, there are some areas that Indian authorities need to work on to further improve the quality of healthcare. Some key improvement areas include:

- Infrastructure: infrastructure is the major concern affecting India as a Destination. Some drawbacks include lack of proper flight connectivity to all destinations, bad roads, safe food and after availability etc. Also, target oriented infrastructure investment could prove helpful.
- Accreditation: Many hospitals in India still do not have international accreditation which could make them eligible for coverage with foreign insurance agencies. This would see a surge in the number of patients willing to come to India for treatment.
- Industry Issues: There is a need for standardized education in Medical institutions and regulations to curb quacks. Also, doctors and other healthcare professionals need to be trained on interpersonal and communication skills. Hygiene is also a major point of concern for patients and steps need to be taken to increase awareness among medical attendants.
- Marketing: India as a safe and trustworthy destination for both medical and tourism purpose is still unknown to many and this needs to be promoted on a large platform. This could be achieved by exhibition, road shows, and advertisements in target countries.

4. CONCLUSION

Even though India offers many opportunities for medical tourism growth, there are aspects which need immediate attention. Medical tourists choose India as their favourable destination because of the key opportunities in Indian healthcare sector in the form of efficient infrastructures and technology. Factors such as low cost, scale and range of treatments provided by India differentiate it from other medical tourism destinations. The health insurance market and National medical system here are well developed, which is convenient for visitors from the west and the Middle East. They also find the hospital expenses very affordable.

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